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ABSTRACT

The complexity of educational leadership belies simple models and must be examined holistically and historically. Leadership has a setting, a historical framework, a wholeness of meaning, and a diversity of influences. Effective leaders must both articulate the values of society and go beyond them. Most agree leadership: (1) is situational and varies with individuals and events; (2) emerges from every segment of society, and no single program produces leaders; (3) involves helping followers attain goals; (4) has an ethical dimension; and (5) is best understood through studying historical figures. Educational leadership today is made more difficult because of declining financial support, rising demand for accountability, increasing diversity, increasing policy conflicts, and pressure to use technology in the face of access gaps. Effective leaders require such personal competencies as the ability to listen, validate information, speak clearly, learn, use research, motivate, take risks, and establish purpose. Effectiveness requires technical competencies in such areas as professional leadership, information management, professional development, human resources, organizational management, financial management, and information systems. Future leadership will emanate from knowledge, not position, and embrace as priorities democratic principles; basic human rights; adherence to ethics, equity, fairness, and justice; knowledge of best practices; and adherence to the exemplar principle. Educational leaders must express idealism and practicality, remaining convinced of the usefulness of education. (TEJ)

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

by

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"A leader is one who, out of madness or goodness, volunteers to take on the woe of a people. There are few so foolish; hence the erratic quality of leadership in the world."

--John Updike

Educational leadership can be madness or it can make a contribution to improve our schools. It can be a frantic effort to fix everything or it can be concentration on a few important items. It can be a futile exercise of power or it can empower individuals to help themselves. In the face of dramatic social change, a troubled sea of governance conflict, and excessive demands being made on schools, it can be said that one who aspires to school leadership must either be mad or a supreme egotist. The need for educational leaders is an urgent worldwide condition, and fortunately there are some willing "to take on the woe of a people."

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A. Complexities of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership can be partially understood by a study of leadership literature. Such a study will also help us to understand the complex nature of leadership.

In this world, the history of educational leadership will never be complete. There will always be a final chapter to be written. Since educational leadership is extremely complex, simple models (events make the person, charisma, a "leader for all seasons," the "great individual theory," etc.) do not adequately explain the individual or the character of leadership. Leadership must be examined holistically and in context with history. It should not, however, be examined in isolation from the organizations, forces and events that surround it. Leadership has a setting, a historical framework, a wholeness of meaning, and a diversity of influences.

One theory suggests that social evolution requires three forms of leadership; the formation of ideas, the articulation of those ideas, and finally, the building of those ideas. The American Revolution saw this triumvirate at work when the ideas of John Locke were articulated by the patriots and then built by Franklin, Washington, and Hamilton. It may be the sounds of violence and radical change are needed before the builders can appear to be moderates. Often a period of turmoil and conflict is followed by one of cooperation and quiet progress.

There is also a debate as to the merits of shared values between a leader and the group on which the leader aspires to assert influence. Some claim that leadership is possible only when values are similar; other say that leadership cannot occur unless values are divergent. Those who argue for similar values state that leadership is accepted when the leader is trusted and seen as the model for the group. Those who argue for different values say that leadership is the process of changing group values. Their position is that leadership cannot exist without change.

Here again it may be possible that both are needed. The leader must articulate the values of the society, but at the same time have some personal values that go beyond those of the group. Leadership is possible only if one has followers. One cannot have followers if the leader's views and values do not coincide with those of the group. But leadership is also the process of going beyond the status quo, exploring new ideas, and creating new forms. In education, leaders must be in tune with the values of their communities to hold their jobs. They must also contribute something from themselves to earn their pay.

Scholars have also argued as to whether effective leaders are manipulative or sincere. Some state that the act of leadership is always manipulative, that the leader knows where he or she is going and manipulates others toward the objectives. Others claim that when leaders believe and are committed to their purposes, leadership is sincere. Sincerity is defined as the act of believing one's own propaganda.

There is no perfect model for examining leadership. There are no exact criteria. It may be that leadership is so complex that, at best, we can only obtain clues, study a variety of styles, and partially understand it. We can feel it when it occurs; we know when it is not there.

The complexities of leadership are such that conclusions are dangerous. There is no overwhelming consensus on how leaders became leaders and how they influence the direction of society. There are, however, some things about leadership with which most students of the concept will agree. These "truths" may help us to better understand leadership.

1. Leadership is situational and varies with individuals and events. The situation usually helps to make the leader and at times, the leader happens to be in the right place at the right time. Harry Truman is a prime example.

2. There is no single way to prepare leaders or to prepare for leadership. Leaders come from every segment of society and have a variety of styles. There is no set of characteristics which leaders possess and there is no single educational program which will produce individuals who posses leadership qualities.

3. A leader is someone who has followers. Without followers there is no leadership act. The leader usually helps others attain the goals of the group. The leader

guides them to where they wish to go. If no one is going anywhere, there is no need for a leader.

4. Leadership has ethical implications. Even the best intentions may have adverse consequences on others. Sometimes doing what one considers right hurts other people. At the same time inappropriate leadership acts may have beneficial effects. The leader must always consider the moral validity of what is done or not done. In the behavior of people, the ethical dimensions are always present.

5. The study of historical figures helps us to understand leadership. Socrates teaches us how to make ultimate sacrifices by "taking the hemlock;" Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi teach us passive moral resistance; and Thomas Jefferson instructs us on the imperatives of education.

B. Leadership Issues for the 21st Century

As we enter a new century, the issues that face educational leaders are as complex as ever. Headlines from leadership journals and newsletters portray the breadth and depth of the school leadership challenge. Some include:

- "Take Control Before Negotiations Begin"
- "Using 'Continuous Clarity' for Team Success"
- "The Trouble with Standards"

- "How to Lead During Transition"
- "Five Essential Elements of a Team"
- "Make Your People Want to Change"
- "Strong Leaders Delegate"
- "Targeting for Growth"
- "Dealing with Acts of Aggression"
- "Standards are the Life-World of Leadership"
- "Coping with Enrollment Decline"
- "The Superintendent as Staff Developer"
- "Strategies for Dealing with High-Stakes State Tests"
- "Predictable Problems in Achieving Large Scale Change"
- "The Right Questions Lead to the Right Vision"
- "Should School Board Members Visit Their Schools?"
- "Apples and Pears: A Mother Asks, 'Why Treat Boys and Girls Alike?'"
- "Honesty: The Best Policy for Uncertainty"
- "Getting a Group to Make a Decision"

Educational leadership is more difficult now than it has ever been. Those who aspire to take on the "woe of a people" will be confronted with:

1. Decreasing financial support for public education with increasing support for alternatives to traditional public policy: charter schools, open enrollment,

vouchers, choice (within and outside of public education), and home schooling (one of the most rapidly developing alternatives to public education).

2. Increasing demand for accountability for both improving academic quality and extending that quality to an ever-increasing number of children. Educational leaders are to accomplish this with minimal increase in financial support and better utilization of current staffs in order to produce a more highly educated workforce.

3. Increasing expectations to better educate children of a more pluralistic and troubled society. You will be faced with more special education children, more children whose primary language is not English, and a greater number of children who come from nontraditional families. Such an evolution requires a re-deployment and expansion of resources to satisfy the demands for accountability.

4. Increasing conflict in the governance of education as more and more pluralistic interests are expressed. Conflicts will develop over the cost of educating special needs children, over appropriate curriculum, over safe buildings, over choice plans, over separation of powers, over teaching methods, and dozens of other possible conflict areas.

5. Pressure to effectively use more and more technology to improve the quality of education. At the same time, access to and ability to use technology contributes

to greater differences between rich and poor, technological literacy is also influencing pedagogy and worldwide communications. Given cost, access and technological literacy issues, however, the majority of schools to play catch-up for decades to come.

C. Needed Leadership Qualities

Faced with these difficult conditions, what do educational leaders of the future need in order to be successful? The qualities needed can be divided into personal competencies and technical competencies. Personal competencies are demanded by the nature of society and technical competencies and are demanded by the nature of the position of educational leadership. A listing of the competencies needed includes:

1. Personal Competencies:

- Ability to listen effectively – understanding both content and feeling
- Ability to validate the accuracy of information received
- Ability to speak frankly and clearly and to speak directly to the issue
- Ability to be positive about life, about self, and about one's work
- Ability to understand and to articulate learning processes
- Ability to keep current, to synthesize knowledge and to utilize research
- Ability to receive satisfaction and reinforcement from one's work
- Ability to self-motivate and to inspire colleagues

- Ability to try new ideas, take risks and encourage others to do so
- Ability to articulate purpose, to establish a vision and to inspire confidence in schools

2. Technical Competencies in:

- Professional and Ethical Leadership
- Information Management and Education
- Curriculum, Instruction and Learning Environment
- Professional Development and Human Resources
- Student Personnel Services
- Organizational Management
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Financial Management and Resource Allocation
- Technology and Information Systems

D. Imperatives of Leadership

Abraham Lincoln was unquestionably one of the great public policy leaders of his time. Writings by and about Lincoln enumerate executive strategies for tough times. In his book, Lincoln on Leadership, Donald T. Phillips details ideas which he suggests Lincoln would embrace in the 21st century:

- Get out of the office and circulate with your associates
- Build strong alliances
- Persuade rather than coerce
- Subscribe to honesty and integrity as the best policies
- Never act out of vengeance or spite
- Have the courage to handle unjust criticism
- Be a master of paradox
- Be decisive
- Lead by example
- Establish goals
- Be results oriented
- Choose as your chief subordinates people who crave responsibility and take risks
- Encourage innovation
- Master the art of public speaking
- Preach a vision and continually reaffirm it

Educational leadership in the future will take what Herman Kahn called "the quantum leap into a society based on people and not things." Rather than from positions, leadership will emanate from knowledge, from wisdom, from the ability to persuade, and from a personal commitment to fairness and justice. Leadership will be established

"through the consent of the governed," and from a basis of ethics, ideas and persuasion. The imperatives of this kind of leadership are obvious:

1. The appreciation and protection of democratic principles.

2. The protection and extension of basic human rights.

3. The adherence to ethics, equity, fairness and justice.

4. Knowledge of best practices, effective pedagogy, brain development and other educational research.

5. Adherence to the exemplar principle through which outstanding leaders serve as role models to emerging leaders.

Fred M. Hechinger once stated that effective leaders, "lead by example, by force of ideas, by devotion to fairness and justice." Such are the Imperatives of Leadership in this time of increasing focus on educational accountability and diversity.

Conclusion

Horace Mann wrote that "one should be ashamed to die until he has won some victory for mankind." Henry Kissinger said, "The task of the leader is to get people from where they are to where they have not been." If we are to win some victories for mankind, we must move people from vested interest to the public good, from bigotry to tolerance, from hostility to peaceful co-existence. Education is that vehicle and the challenge is that of the school leader.

In the Euro-Education '96 conference held in Denmark, the Danish Minister of Education stated it well. "Education," he said, "provides the social knowledge enabling all of us to personally participate in our democracy and a sustainable development of society."

Leaders in education need to express idealism and practicality. An idealist is one who sees the goal, but who is also willing to provide solutions to the concrete problems which prevent the attainment of the goal. Victory is not achieved by rhetoric. It is attained by hard work, by support for teachers, by confrontations with hostile forces, and by occasionally facing the possibility of "taking the hemlock."

Educational leaders have always been positive people – almost missionary in their belief in the perfectibility of the human race. They never wavered in their strong understanding of the usefulness of schools and education. They have had faith in the

purposes of schooling. School leaders have emulated Pilgrim's Progress in their zeal to provide an effective education for each boy and girl, no matter the obstacles or the difficulties. Their mission was indestructible, even as many lost their jobs, were stalemated by powerful political forces, or were hampered by the lack of resources.

Being an educational leader is difficult. It is complex. It is rarely honored in song and book. But when the final chapter is written, it will be education and educational leaders who will have contributed most to the protection of democracy, to equity, to justice and to human dignity. Leaders need to take on the woe of a people, lead by the force of ideas, and govern through the consent of the governed. When they do, they will be honored and respected. They will share in the glory of making a difference and be praised in the volumes of educational history to be written in the future. More importantly, they will be satisfied and reinforced to attempt even greater accomplishments.

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